

Single Family Design Guidelines Update Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance Update

Steering Committee

Meeting #20 Notes February 11, 2005

Steering Committee members: Chair Dianne Channing, Bruce Bartlett, Joe Guzzardi, Vadim Hsu, Charmaine Jacobs, Bill Mahan, Helene Schneider, Richard Six.

Staff: Bettie Weiss (City Planner), Jaime Limón (Supervising Planner), Heather Baker (Project Planner), Jason Smart (Intern).

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Claudia Madsen: Was told by the former mayor of the City of Goleta that the most effective part of Goleta's regulations regarding home size is the 50 percent cap, which limits additional square footage to 50 percent of the existing house. Hopes the meetings will soon be televised.

Jean Monroe: Interested in preserving historical drainage patterns and identifying the locations of springs in the Hillside Design District. More than just a slab foundation is needed on steep slopes; a main foundation needs to be anchored into the hillside. Extra measures are needed for retaining walls on slopes of greater than 50 percent. Not all parts of the same hill are equally stable. Would like guidelines for slope stability analysis. Regarding the question on page 20 of Issue Paper I: "What should form the basis of hillside home size limits?", everything is incumbent on everything else. Limiting the footprint of a home can limit grading and the impact on surrounding landscaping and oak trees. Delighted that the committee is dealing with these issues, which have not been properly dealt with before and have caused needless conflict between neighbors.

III. Administrative Items

Correction: The diagram of the house labeled as being on La Vista Grande in today's PowerPoint presentation should be labeled as being on La Vista del Oceano.

FAR Subcommittee: Brian Barnwell reported that he, Bill Mahan, Dianne Channing and Bruce Bartlett met to review an updated version of the proposed FAR chart and said they were comfortable with the revised numbers. The new chart still has two sets of numbers, one of which is set at 15% above the other. The subcommittee also discussed the following topics:

- **Lot Size:** Perhaps the chart should not include lots greater than 12,500 square feet. It may also be appropriate to differently regulate homes on lots greater than 15,000 square feet.
- **Terminology:** It still must be established what to call each set of numbers. Perhaps "trigger" could be used for the first set and "maximum with findings" for the second.

- **Findings:** The Steering Committee must discuss the acceptable findings for when a project can exceed the first set of numbers. Unusual lot or site characteristics may make exceeding the first set appropriate, but good design alone should not.
- **Ridgelines:** It may be appropriate to differentiate between a “ridgeline” and a “skyline.” For example, a house on top of the Riviera is generally less visually disruptive than a house atop the Mesa; whereas the Riviera is backed by mountains, homes on top of the Mesa extend into the sky.
- **Hillside Types:** Urban hillside areas (such as the Riviera) should be differentiated from rural hillside areas.

Story Pole Subcommittee: Dianne Channing said the subcommittee had not met since the previous Steering Committee meeting.

IV. Hillside Issue Paper: Issue Paper I

The Steering Committee discussed the following Issue Paper I topics: Hillside Spilldown, Retaining Walls and Grading.

Hillside Spilldown and Revised Height Limits:

Staff presented diagrams of hillside homes with potential height limits drawn in. Steering Committee discussion then continued from the previous meeting. The Steering Committee made the following comments regarding hillside spilldown:

- Height limits to prevent spilldown should perhaps be less restrictive for very steep lots than less steep ones in order to prevent excessive grading.
- The apparent spilldown of a house is dependent more on the slope under the home’s building envelope than on the overall slope of the lot. This issue may be addressed by no longer basing the Hillside Design District boundaries on slope.
- A 25-foot height limit on lots with less than a certain slope, such as 25%, would help limit spilldown without preventing reasonable construction.
- Limiting height and limiting spilldown cannot be approached separately, because the two influence each other.
- Apparent height is often different than actual height and should therefore be flagged by Staff or serve as a trigger for design review boards to consider.
- Retaining walls used to create grade contribute to the apparent height of structures, whereas other walls, such as those far from a house, do not.
- Placing absolute limits on the number of steps of hillside spilldown is difficult because of individual lots’ different slopes, shapes, etc.
- Applicants want clear, specific guidelines of what they can or cannot exceed.

Motion (by Bill Mahan): Accept the following revisions to the proposed Hillside Spilldown Guidelines language:

- Homes with a total run of less than 60’ in horizontal distance for combined steps are preferred.
- Homes with an “apparent height” (lowest point of contact with grade to highest point of building dimension) less than 30’ are preferable. Design review boards will carefully consider appropriateness of homes exceeding an apparent height of 30’. Retaining walls to create grade supporting a residence are included in a structure’s apparent height.

- Although the Zoning Ordinance height limit is 30', appropriate hillside project proposals usually have a height dimension of 25' or less.

2nd: Vadim Hsu.

All in favor.

Retaining Wall Height:

The Steering Committee continued its discussion from the previous meeting and made the following comments:

- Height limits of retaining walls for fill should be less restrictive than retaining walls for cut, because retraining walls for cut are less aesthetically pleasing.
- Stepped retaining walls should have a distance between steps of at least the retaining wall height limit in order to prevent the retaining wall from appearing taller than the height limit.
- More than three steps of a retaining wall is probably excessive, but this should be left to design review boards' discretion.
- Stone retaining walls are not necessarily aesthetically pleasing, especially if overly large and prominently visible.

Motion (by Helene Schneider): Create a Zoning Ordinance standard to limit retaining wall heights visible above finished grade as follows:

- Fill – limit to 6'; maximum of 12' combined wall heights allowed.
- Cut – limit to 8'; maximum of 16'.
- Minimum distance between retaining walls must be at least the average of the height of the two walls. This creates no more than a 45-degree angle between the tops of the retaining walls.
- Exception: Building official determines a taller wall is needed for health and safety reasons.

2nd: Charmaine Jacobs.

All in favor.

Grading

Staff presentation was followed by Steering Committee discussion. The Steering Committee made the following comments regarding grading:

- Grading should require special review if there is import or export.
- Removal and recompaction should not be penalized if recompaction does not require import or export.
- The effects of grading on the environment are important, not just aesthetics.

No decision was reached on grading due to a lack of time; the issue will be discussed further at the next meeting.

V. Review Upcoming Schedule

VI. Adjourn